

Weekly Situation Report
Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary (FKNMS)
March 4, 2003
From: Billy Causey

HOT TOPICS & HEADS UP:

The Seagrass Awareness Celebration took place at World Wide Sportsman in Islamorada on Sat. March 1 from 10AM-3PM. There were 10 booths representing agencies involved in seagrass protection. Approximately 200 people attended the event. Those attending could collect information on regulations, ask questions of the Law Enforcement officers and see the critters that live in the seagrass up-close in Florida Marine Research Institute's touch tank. The children's booth provided various activities including Build a Seagrass Community activity board, seagrass critter puppets and button making. Students from the Upper Keys "4-H for Him" Club assisted younger children at the activity tables making buttons and puppets by volunteering for the day. Four boat trips out on Florida Bay to one of the bird staked damaged areas were provided.

Anne McCarthy, FKNMS Lower Keys DARP team leader, is back in the Tortugas at the MSC Diego anchor damage site to oversee the continuation of restoration activities. The responsible party chartered the "Ultimate Getaway", a crew boat out of Ft. Myers, for the 10 day cruise. LR's newest NOAA Science Diver, Alicia Stevenson, has joined the cruise for a couple days in order to experience a large scale restoration project.

Billy Causey is participating in an MPA Workshop at the University of Rhode Island this week. Last week he participated in the US Coral Reef Task Force meeting in Washington, DC.

Fiona Wilmot, on behalf of the SAC, and Alex Score of the Upper Regional Office attended a NEPA Scoping Workshop hosted by the Army Corps on February 27 in Marathon, on proposed wastewater and storm water improvements in the Keys.

Officer David McDaniel observed a charter vessel fishing at Molasses Reef SPA. The Islamorada captain was issued a warning for the same violation a few weeks prior. This time Officer McDaniel issued the captain a citation for fishing at Molasses Reef SPA.

Officer David McDaniel observed three Miami men spear fishing off Key Largo. He issued all three men citations for the spear fishing violations and written warnings for possession of an undersize red grouper, no salt water fishing license and no personal flotation device on their vessel.

Officer David Dipre responded to a grounded vessel near Niles Channel. A Cudjoe man grounded his twenty-two foot vessel on the sea grass flat. The man powered the vessel off the flat causing a blowhole of twelve feet by eighteen feet. Officer Dipre issued the man a federal citation for destruction of sea grass. The fine amount is to be determined by federal attorneys following a full assessment of the damage.

2/28/03 Art Hartman was issued permit# FKNMS-2002-074 and #FKNMS-2003-006 to Survey and Inventory within the Middle Region FKNMS. His project title, the Sanctuary Project aims to locate, identify and document Submerged Cultural Resources within the permit areas.

2/25/03 Final Report received from Mr. Richard Lightner for the three year Lower Region Survey and Inventory permit # FKNMS-99-014. 169 survey days were spent conducting remote sensing. During the three-year period 183 anomalies were recorded. Mr. Lightner is requesting an extension of his permit to continue operations.

The Region Safety Manager, Ron Mattox (CASC) and the Region Environmental Compliance Officer, Lynette Ansell (EASC) visited all FKNMS facilities. The Upper Keys and Lower Keys offices are still working on a few items that need to be resolved. The Marathon office review was completed and closed. Dave Score, June Cradick and Fritz Wettstein completed the Stop Taking Avoidable Risks (STAR) training and several staff members took forklift training during the week. LR Maintenance Officer Skip Dwyer was certified as an instructor and can teach this required training in the future.

Coupon Bight Aquatic Preserve Manager Alicia Stevenson attended DEP sponsored wetlands delineation training at the Marathon DEP office on the 25-27th of March. The training focused on wetland plant identification and the process of delineating wetlands.

Next week, Brian Keller will attend meetings of the Florida Bay Program Management Committee and the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Science Coordination Team. He will also participate in the CINMS MPA Monitoring Workshop the 14th-16th.

HEAD'S UP:

City of Key West Cruise Ship Summit to be held March 13th, 8:30 am at the Casa Marina. Billy Causey will be participating in a panel, and several Sanctuary team members will attend the Summit.

FKNMS will host NMSP HQ Personnel David Bizot and Christos Michalopoulos for the Telepresence Site Workshop on 6-7 March at the Marathon office. The goal of the workshop is to complete detailed planning for the FKNMS telepresence installation. The telepresence project uses interactive technology, including remote operation of camera systems, robots, and underwater vehicles to allow the public to experience our sanctuaries and interact with them in "real-time".

MEDIA - PRESS – NEWS COVERAGE:

"Shrimp boat faces Sanctuary fine," Reporter, February 21, 2003

"Scientists to use bird droppings in Florida Keys seagrass restoration project," Sun-Sentinel, Wednesday, February 26, 2003

"Seagrass Awareness Month Festival," the Independent, February 26, 2003

"Fertile Approach: Singer's fine benefits Keys seagrass project," Miami Herald, Thursday, February 27, 2003

"Healthy seagrass gives marine life its start," Florida Keys Keynoter, Wednesday, February 26, 2003

"Biologists, birds help restore seagrass," the Reporter, February 28, 2003

"Free festival highlights seagrass," Reporter, February 28, 2003

Cheva Heck discussed U.S. Coral Reef Task Force resolution on water quality and Seagrass Awareness Month on US 1 Radio's "Morning Magazine," Monday, March 3, 2003

Cheva Heck did interview with WKEZ 96.9 and SUN 104.1 FM on U.S. Coral Reef

"Federal task force strengthens Keys bid for wastewater funds," The Key West Citizen, Tuesday, March 4, 2003

Seagrass radio shows (scheduled by Cheva Heck):

Joy Tatgenhorst and Rich Jones of Monroe County were guests on "Good Morning, Marathon," WAVK, Thursday, February 27, 2003

David Symanski of Everglades National Park and Michelle Oehmichen of Biscayne National Park were guests on "Girls Night Out," WKEZ 96.9, Tuesday, February 25, 2003

Bill Goodwin, Kevin Kirsch and Sean Meehan were guests on Capt. Bill Kelly's radio show, Friday February 28, 2003

Cheva Heck, Pat Wells of the Florida Park Service and Chelsea Bagley and Paris Wood of Coral Shores High School were guests on Florida Keys Roundtable, Tuesday, March 4, 2003

Other public affairs: Cheva Heck worked Seagrass Festival. Cheva Heck coordinating visit to seagrass restoration site by Miami network affiliate. Cheva Heck coordinating show on seagrass natural history and restoration for Nature South. Cheva Heck assisting National Geographic Today with several shows in the Keys, including artificial reefs and Queen of Nassau. Cheva Heck continuing to assist with media strategy for marine mammal strandings. Assisted with publicity for coral and seagrass PEIS. Coordinated with state public affairs on Coral Reef Task Force and Seagrass Awareness Month releases.

COMMUNITY EVENTS:

LR Team OCEAN coordinator John Nazzaro will give a FKNMS presentation to the Venture Out mobile home community on Cudjoe Key on 3/4/03. The expected audience is a couple hundred people.

CONGRESSIONAL ACTIVITIES:

-None to report.